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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 7, 2003

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NINETY-NINE-ACRE CONSERVATION RESTRICTION IN GILL WILL PRESERVE LAND FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

Land use restriction will allow public access, protect rare species

A ninety-nine-acre parcel of woods and wetlands along the Barney Hale Road in Gill will be permanently protected as a result of a conservation restriction announced today by Environmental Affairs Secretary Ellen Roy Herzfelder.

Longtime Gill residents Richard French and Emily Samuels decided to gift the parcel's development rights to the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), which manages the statewide forest and parks system. The restriction will further the agency's efforts to protect the environment surrounding French King Gorge, a rugged, unspoiled area known for rare species and scenic beauty.

The property is situated near Darby Hill and has a maximum elevation of more than 600 feet. The restriction assures that the site will remain undeveloped while allowing forest management and limited public access for passive recreation. Trails and an old road run through the wooded property, which contains birch, hemlock, white pine, and oak. A vernal pool provides extensive habitat diversity.

Secretary Ellen Roy Herzfelder said, "Gifts of land are especially important and welcome in these times of limited state funds. We are delighted that these landowners have placed such a high priority on land preservation. Their vision and generosity will be appreciated for generations to come."

DEM Commissioner Peter C. Webber added, "The Department of Environmental Management has nearly 625 acres of the French King Gorge area under its protection. Such a sizeable gift of land is a tremendous boost to our ongoing land protection efforts."

Through its Connecticut Valley Action Program, DEM has worked for several years to protect land in and around French King Gorge. Formed by the Connecticut River over thousands of years, the gorge's unique topography and concentration of threatened plant and animal communities make it a resource worthy of protection.

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